

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5499

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Governmental Operations, February 18, 2013

Title: An act relating to time for filing initiative measures.

Brief Description: Changing the time for filing initiative measures.

Sponsors: Senators Benton, Hasegawa and Baumgartner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/14/13, 2/18/13 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Braun and Rivers.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Conway, Fraser and Hasegawa, Ranking Member.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The Legislature adopted processes for initiative measures in 1912. These processes are preserved in the state Constitution and allow:

- initiatives to the people, where the issue is submitted for a vote of the people at the next state general election; and
- initiatives to the Legislature, where the issue is submitted to the Legislature at its next regular session.

Initiative petitions require certified signatures from 8 percent of the total number of votes cast for the Office of the Governor at the last regular gubernatorial election to be placed on the ballot. Based on the Secretary of State's data from the 2012 gubernatorial election, the certified signatures of 246,372 registered voters are required to place an initiative measure on the ballot through the 2016 general election.

The text of an initiative to the people must be filed with the Secretary of State's office within ten months prior to the election at which it is to be submitted. The signature petitions for an initiative to the people must be filed with the Secretary of State at least four months before

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the general election. The text of an initiative to the Legislature must be filed with the Secretary of State's office within ten months prior to the next regular legislative session at which it is to be submitted. The signature petitions for an initiative to the Legislature must be filed at least ten days before the regular legislative session begins.

Summary of Bill: The text of an initiative to the people must be filed with the Secretary of State within 20 months prior to the election at which it is to be submitted. The text of an initiative to the Legislature must be filed with the Secretary of State within 20 months prior to the next regular legislative session at which it is to be submitted.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: If we gave citizens more time to collect signatures, they would not need paid signature gatherers. This is an opportunity to give citizens more chances to be involved in their government while still maintaining their jobs and taking care of their families. The number of signatures required has skyrocketed, and it is a huge undertaking for grassroots efforts. People cannot do it in a short amount of time. This bill helps grassroots people compete with the billionaires. The average amount of money spent to qualify for the ballot has gone up exponentially. Allowing signature gathering in nicer weather might result in more grassroots efforts.

CON: It is not necessarily the length of time to get signatures, it is the deadline that motivates people to respond. There are problems trying to predict what issues we want to deal with two years from now. If the law changes after you have the signatures on a measure, there can be conflicts. I do not think we have a problem getting initiatives on the ballot. There is a potential overlap between one year's initiatives and the subsequent year's initiatives that could be confusing.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Benton, prime sponsor; Edward Agazarm, citizen; Tim Eyman, Initiative 517.

CON: Steve Zemke, Rebecca Faust, citizens.